

The Queen of Agriculture

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People always expect the hero to be a strutting male who flies around the city saving people. In my case, this is not true. Some heroes are girls and some don't even wear capes. Some heroes don't even live in cities either. That's what's special about my hero; she was a hero for the farmers.

Virginia Claypool Meredith was a woman ahead of her times. Growing up during the Civil War, she was greatly influenced by nationalism and had an undying love for her state as well as her country. After attending Glendale College, she was united in marriage with Henry Clay Meredith. Running his nation renowned farm, Oakland Farm, was certainly tiresome and hard work, but Virginia persevered. Twelve years later, her husband passed away and left the farm in her name. Instead of selling the farm as many expected, she hired more herdsmen and kept it up better than before.

Taking advantage of the situation, Virginia begins speaking out. At first, she only talked about breeding, but by the end of her career, her speeches had spread to include farming, the terror of cities, women's' rights, and homemaking. Despite feeling the suppression of men and large corporate companies, she always spoke out for what she believed in. When Virginia gave her first out of state speech, she was presented with a plaque that read, "The Citizens of Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the Queen of Agriculture." Almost 40 years after the first award, Virginia was presented with another award that said, "To Virginia Claypool Meredith who, working alone, won success in farming and later, working with others, pioneered effectively in the science of home making."

Virginia believed that people should stay on the farm. She preached that the educated farmer was the highest form of manufacturer. It takes more than strength to run a farm. Instead of being taken in by the illusions of Industrial Revolution cities, people should stay on the farm and use their intellect to benefit the community. Virginia's most popular speech, "Farm Life: Its Privileges and Responsibilities", was in such high demand that it was published as an article in every English-speaking country in the world! Many boys and girls across the nation took her words to heart and went to colleges to study breeding and agriculture before returning to their farms.

Taking advantage of her popular reputation, Virginia pressed Purdue to open a girls' department at Purdue. The men on the board refused year after year because they thought it wasn't fitting for a girl to go to college and learn about agriculture and home-making. Despite these hardships, she saw a girls' department opened at Purdue during her lifetime. She also opened the first girls' department in Minnesota.

What really speaks to me is how Virginia persevered throughout all of the hardships not just in her career, but in her personal life as well. Her parents passed away. Her in-laws passed away. Her husband passed away. Her best friend passed away and left her two children in Virginia's care. Can you imagine how much that can break a person? And through it all, she kept going. In some ways, she worked harder and better than ever before. That is what I admire the most about Virginia. Yes, she was a charismatic speaker and a sophisticated woman, but what makes her stand out to me is how she kept going. She never looked back and did what felt right in her heart. Tell me, isn't that an admirable trait? To fight when all seems lost? Virginia had more courage than I could ever hope for in my entire life.

Virginia Claypool Meredith is my hero. Instead of wearing a cape, she wears a bustle and corset. Even though she is all but forgotten today, I know and admire her. She was strong in the face of hardships. She stood up for what she believed in. I was by taught by her to stand up for what I believe in, even if it means I stand alone. Someday, I hope Virginia to be known nationwide like she was many years ago. Even if that never happens, I will always remember her actions and words. I will remember her. And I hope that someday every one will, too.